

INTEGRATED INTERNATIONAL PROJECTWORK

A research expedition across geographies and cultures

Concept of the course

Students co-design their learning goals in **four phases**, leading to:

- ▶ scientific, intellectual and professional competencies
- ▶ competencies in collaboration, communication and social responsibility

1/ Co-designing the content and topics

Students are introduced to the geographical and societal context of the area, and together they decide on the research topics they tackle in the project groups.

2/ Diving into the research topics

Every group develops the research design, formulates research questions and selects the appropriate methods. The process is monitored, and they get feedback from the lecturers.

3/ International and intercultural real-life experience in

This is the highlight of the course!

- ▶ During the 9-day field trip, the students become acquainted with the diverse geographies and cultures through the knowledge exchange with colleagues from Danish universities.
- ▶ They perform the research in the case study areas and give concise pitches about their topic to different audiences.
- ▶ After collecting the field data, students analyse and synthesise the results.
- ▶ They present their findings to colleagues from the collaborating universities and other actors, as well as to colleagues, friends, and family back in Belgium (the presentations are streamed).
- ▶ The expedition ends with a two-day visit to Copenhagen.

4/ Synthesising the research competencies

The final results and conclusions are synthesised in a concise and complete scientific report. The reports are assembled into a portfolio that forms the basis for future project work in subsequent editions.

The course at a glance

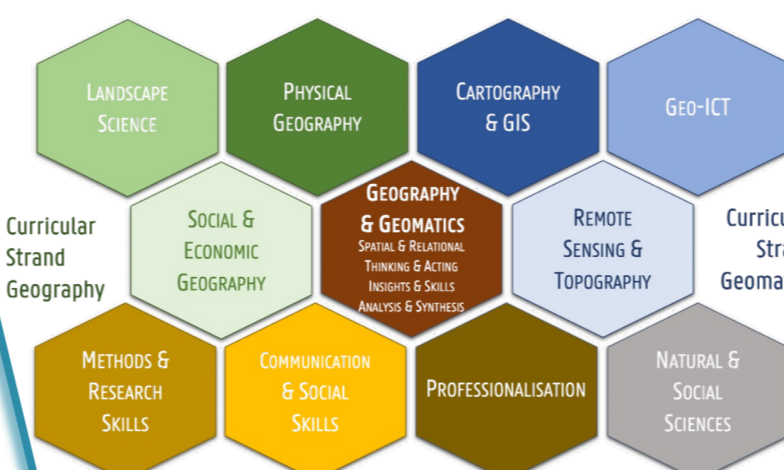
This course brings together different curricular strands of geography and geomatics in combination with theories and skills from both natural and social sciences in an **integrative, research-based learning experience** in the MSc of Geography and Geomatics. It promotes the **transdisciplinary integration of knowledge, skills, and methods**.

Students design their own research projects addressing a well-defined problem, build on **previously acquired knowledge and research methodologies** while fostering **new and advanced research skills** defined by their selected topics.

The course aims to enhance students' **scientific and intellectual competencies** in geography through critical literature reviews, research design, fieldwork and scientific analysis and reporting.

During a **multi-day international fieldwork**, students apply various field techniques for data collection, scientific analysis, and interpretation within the studied region.

Students work collaboratively in an **interdisciplinary and international context**, enhancing their **teamwork, communication abilities and their entrepreneurial skills**. Outcomes are shared through a clear, fluent, and structured oral presentation and a written scientific report in English.



Transdisciplinarity

Ownership of learning

Challenged-based education

Get inspired by the other 16 projects in the portfolio.

Above all, the course is experienced as an academic expedition – an opportunity to explore diverse geographies and cultures – and is often regarded by students as a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Research oriented teaching

Replicability

Intercultural and international learning

Collaboration with external stakeholders

Versatility & entrepreneurship

Partner universities and colleagues

Actors involved and outreach

Looking back – where are we coming from?

The course concept is an inspiration for new initiatives and collaborations. It has been applied in other degrees and with other universities (e.g. MSc Spatial Planning, as a BIP to Lisbon). Colleagues from different departments, universities & outside academia will expand the collaborations for future editions.

Never get rid of this course!

By far the greatest part of my academic journey

A truly great experience that has opened my eyes

The best course with a lot of beautiful and unforgettable moments
This trip was a lifetime experience! It was a great combination of working academically, together with a group of tight-knit friends in a very relaxed atmosphere!

The quotes of the students say it all and keep the lecturers motivated: Geographers are eager to explore and understand the world and want to be overwhelmed by unknown landscapes and cultures. The course supports students in becoming excellent researchers and gives them the sweetest memories of their education.

The course is organised since AY 2020-2021, following a major reform of the study program. Previously, different course components were included and tested during a geographical excursion to Portugal, in collaboration with the University of Lisbon. The first edition was organised during the pandemic in the summer of 2021 – so no flying but driving to Denmark!



A pandemic as a momentum

We will drive with minivans instead of flying

The new format opened alternative opportunities for the team and students as a group, fostered greater entrepreneurial attitudes among students and gave them increased responsibility and ownership of their learning experiences. The shift in transport mode created a enormous flexibility for field work, gave the students a large responsibility and reduced our CO2 emissions.

Student's involvement



Planning and design of the course in Belgium

Students co-design the course in:

- ▶ Defining their own research topics, questions and methodologies in a research plan
- ▶ Present intermediate progress and provide feedback to each other
- ▶ Prepare the field work
- ▶ Interview stakeholders online to get acquainted with the local context
- ▶ Make appointments with stakeholders for the fieldwork

But they also:

- ▶ Prepare activities that stimulate the group process (a quiz, a bingo, print t-shirts, playlists on Spotify, ...)
- ▶ Brainstorm about the menu to prepare during the field work.

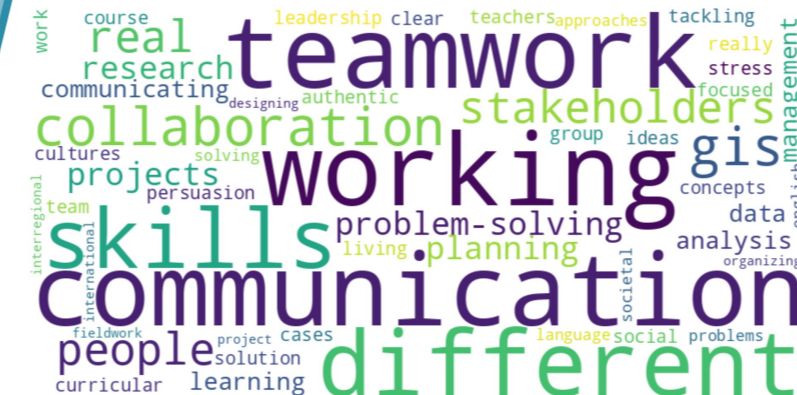
During the field work

- ▶ Students organise the fieldwork themselves, including planning the drives with the vans, and work towards the final presentations
- ▶ They get control of the Instagram page of the department
- ▶ They also decide on the meals for 30 people, go to Danish grocery shops to find the preferred ingredients that fit the budget, do the dishes and basic cleaning, ...
- ▶ But above all, we have fun together, go swimming in the beach, enjoy the bonfires and sunsets, ...

Follow-up afterwards

- ▶ The final outcomes are reported in their project portfolios
- ▶ Students participate in the peer assessment
- ▶ And they also evaluate the course to improve it further and further

Which acquired skills are valuable in your current career?



The course makes the students more aware of the many skills they are acquiring during their education. Besides the scientific and methodological skills in geography, the numerous and versatile soft skills are emphasised and appreciated. **Above all, they learn through experience and from each other.**

How much did you develop the following skills during the course?



Students' outcomes and skills bag



Colleagues from two Danish universities are intensively involved in

- ▶ Giving an online lecture in the preparatory phase
- ▶ Providing the Danish context of the projects
- ▶ Guiding the students around the case area of Odsherred and in Copenhagen
- ▶ Provide the research infrastructure for the analysis and synthesis of the findings
- ▶ Participating in the final presentations, organised at Roskilde University, and engaging in the Q&A session

Public institutions



- ▶ Staff of the Geopark Odsherred provided background information about geology, landscape characteristics, outdoor recreation and tourism outreach.
- ▶ The municipality offered information about national and local policies, instruments and measures

Societal actors

The real-life topics require interaction with diverse actors:

- ▶ Inhabitants
- ▶ Nature managers
- ▶ Flextrafik
- ▶ Fishers & merchants in the harbours
- ▶ Farm & farmers associations
- ▶ Local merchants & entrepreneurs
- ▶ Owners of sites for renewable energy and vineyards

